No. 71

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

It was some time before Lillian could find the strength to speak. What a dreadful shock it must have been to have affected her so deeply.

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KNIGHT was talking to the doctor and continued by saying: "Your friend, the nurse, has been here and chattered about conscience, but I guess she won't come here again so soon, now that she knows just how I feel about it—and she is a decent creature, too, in her way."

"But, you must not speak so much, Knight," replied the physician. "Listen, I mean well with you. Do you imagine I do not know that something oppresses you? In your delirium you have betrayed yourself.

"Now, I am not a minister, and you can tell me what has made you restless day and night. Why not lighten your conscience? Do it quickly, for soon it may be too late."

A low, painful sobbing at his side caused Dr. Van Buren to turn. Weeping, Ellen was kneeling at her husband's bedside.

Her face was shadowed by deep despair as she softly whispered:

"Oh, doctor, persuade him to talk if you can. There is something on his conscience, I know, I am positive since last night. He talked constantly—wild, awful things. Once he cried out, 'I saw you kill him'."

She had spoken in a low voice and her husband had not heard her.

"Are you sure you made no mistake, Mrs. Knight?" Dr. Van Buren asked the woman in a whisper. "You know it is not a small matter for a man in your husband's condition to make such an assertion."

Mrs. Knight shook her head.

"No, I am not mistaken," she answered confidently. "I heard it only too plain. I tell you my husband has something on his mind that worries him. Get him to tell it."

The physician shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll try," he said. "But I am not at all sure of success. You know, your husband never trusted me very much. Suppose you——"

"No," she broke in. "He won't tell me, doctor. He will trust you now because he has to. His life is in your hands."

Dr. Van Buren turned to the prostrate man and addressed him in a coaxing tone.

"Make a clean breast of it, Mr. Knight." he said. "If you saw a crime committed, or perhaps murder done, your confession might yet save an innocent man from the electric chair. Come, speak up."

Chapter 232

KNIGHT'S CONFESSION

THE DYING MAN had received the doctor's admonition in sullen silence, turning his face face towards the wall. A peculiar disturbance had seized upon the physician. A suspicion, nay more, a sinister presentiment awoke in his mind

Again he leaned over the man and said urgently:

"Knight, if you know anything, do not take it with you to the grave. Do not forget that by an open confession you may benefit others, and you can do a good deed before you die.

"There is punishment after death, you may be sure, but if you remorsefully confess your guilt, you reconcile yourself to God and become worthy of his mercy."

The man growled something incomprehensible. Dr. Van Buren listened tensely and then heard him mutter:

"No, I will say nothing. Burt doesn't deserve it, for he is a rascal—he has not kept his word. He never paid the money he promised."

"Knight," rang the doctor's voice anew, "soon you will be before your judge in heaven. Clear your soul of your guilt by confession and consider well—if you do not speak out, you become guilty of a crime."

Dr. Van Buren's agitation was increasing. As if animated by a higher power, he proceeded urgently:

"Knight, you are party to a murder. Tell me, is it that of Roger Hawkins?"

A dull, heavy pause followed. At last came the

hoarse, sullen answer:

"Yes."

As if electrified, the physician sprang up.

"Great God!" gasped the trembling woman beside him.

"I almost expected this!" Dr. Van Buren cried. "Do you know the murderer?"

"Yes, I came just as he shot him," said Knight.

"Merciful God! And you have kept it to yourself all this time?" cried the doctor. "You stood quietly by and saw an innocent man under suspicion and imprisoned for months for this crime!

"You would not speak out when his life was in the balance, and not even after his acquittal, when you knew that everybody avoided him as if he were a criminal!

"Oh, Knight, how could you do this! What has Victor Talbot ever done to you that you let this danger and disgrace rest on him, although it would have cost you but a word to release him!

"His sufferings have not yet ceased, trouble and illness are in his house. Misery has brought his wife low, and you have all this on your conscience, Knight, because you have not named the guilty man.

"Have you no feeling at all? Say the word, and that poor woman will regain her strength and Victor Talbot can raise his head in freedom and pride like a man!"

The sick man answered not. He gasped as though in the throes of an inner struggle.

"You must speak," murmured Ellen, whose bosom heaved in her excitement. "God will not permit him to take the secret with him to the grave. Oh, it would be terrible, horrible!"

Dr. Van Buren made a motion to soothe and quiet her.

"Knight," he began, turning again to the man, "why is it so hard for you to do one good deed before you die? There is no crime which does not, at last, come to the light of day.

"I will never rest until I have reached the bottom of this mystery and discovered the murderer. You have divulged his Christian name, Burt. He will be found, you may depend upon it, whether you mention him or not.

"I will notify the authorities at once and they will come here. And now, listen; you may die to-day or to-morrow, and it is possible that you may survive for weeks or even months.

"But you will pass your last days or hours, as the case may be, in prison, for you would be placed under arrest as an accomplice. And prison, in the solitude of a cell, breaks one's spirit, Knight—they will break your silence."

Dr. Van Buren knew that death was already at hand.

The suggestion of the possibility of his living on, a little longer, was but an attempt to conquer the man's obstinacy.

He rose with decision and made a motion to go to the door.

A quick change took place in the manner of the stubborn fellow. He raised himself a little in his bed, and stretching out his hand toward Van Buren cried:

"No, no, doctor, stay here! For God's sake, do not set the police on my heels. I want nothing to do with them. For my part I have no objection to telling you who it was, and then, when I am dead, you can do as you please. Now hear me:

"On the morning when Roger Hawkins was found murdered, I was coming home from town. Somehow or

other I had gone out of my way, for I was a little drunk. Besides, we had only moved here then and I was not acquainted with the roads.

"I wandered around and found no one who could set me right. Running around in the open sobered me up and I was sore because I wasn't near home, for I was tired and sleepy.

"It was dawning as I stepped out of a path in the woods on to the road, when I suddenly heard a gun shot. This woke me fully. I ran ahead to see what was doing.

"Indistinctly, in the half light, I saw someone bending over a body lying in the road. I rushed up and caught the man before he could spring up and run."

Knight paused for a moment; his long-drawn speech had consumed a great deal of his strength.

Dr. Van Buren gave him a stimulant and finally he continued.

"The man whom I had caught, dropped what he had in his hands. The dead man's wallet and the gun lay on the ground.

" 'Who is the dead man?' I asked him.

"At first he did not answer and struggled to free himself from me. I drew a whistle and told him I would signal for help. He must have thought I was a farmer or a state police, and was frightened.

"He begged me not to betray him and offered to divide the money in the wallet if I kept quiet. I hesitated. I hadn't a cent in the world and could well use some money.

" 'Help yourself,' said the man. 'I will fix it so that they will think the dead man has committed suicide. He wasn't any good anyway.'

"I shuddered at sight of the dead man whom I did not exactly recognize. But why should I not take the money? What good would it do me to turn the mur-

derer over to the police?

"He would lose his life, but I would be no better off. 'Everyone for himself,' said I to myself, and put out my hand for the money.

"I took the man with me to the cottage here as he had no place to go. On the way I found out his name was Burt Timson, and that he had been in Hawkins' service.

"Hawkins had been careless and left money lying around in his rooms. This was too much of a temptation for Timson and he fell for it.

"He had an affair with a girl which cost him a lot of money, and his wages were not enough.

"On the day before the murder, Mr. Hawkins caught him taking money and discharged him, threatening him with arrest. He lost his head; if he was arrested for theft he would lose his girl.

"All this, and the discovery that Hawkins had just brought a large sum of money home with him in the afternoon, led Timson to form a plan to rob Mr. Hawkins on his way home from the ball to which he knew his former employer was going in the evening.

"All day he ran about in the woods without coming to any decision. The only plan that looked feasible was to sneak into Hawkins' room and overpower him when he came home and went to sleep.

"It was late at night when he had caught this idea, and at the time, he was passing the home of Victor Talbot. There was a light in a room of which the window was open.

"He got a new idea. He went through the window and took a rifle out of a case which stood open, and ran out.

"The dogs had heard him, for they began to bark and he was thoroughly frightened, for on turning

around, he saw someone outside at the door with a light in hand.

"He lay at the roadside in a place which Hawkins would have to pass, and shot him down. He had taken out his wallet, but did not touch his valuables, such as his watch and rings.

"He stayed but a few hours with me," continued Knight, after he had paused to rest again. "He went to town, and got a new place which did not bring him much, but gave him plenty of free time.

"We met each other often. Timson lived in deadly fear of me; he was always afraid I might give him away when I was drunk. He would have left the country, only his girl would not go with him.

"When I had spent the money, I demanded more from him and got it, too. I went to him again and again. At last he got sore, but still he promised to give me five hundred dollars as a final payment.

"Then I lost sight of him. I wrote several letters to him, but received no answer. Then came my rotten accident."

Thoroughly exhausted, Knight sank down on the bed.

"Where is this Timson now?" asked Dr. Van Buren quickly.

In a low voice, the dying man gave the address and then closed his eyes. Dr. Van Buren directed another question to him, but Knight did not seem to hear what was said.

In uncontrollable agitation, the young woman knelt at her husband's bedside.

Though she rejoiced that he had at last confessed, his story was a crushing blow to her.

She realized with horror that the money she had seen on him was tainted with blood.

He had sunk so low as to become the friend and confidant of a murderer, from whom he had extorted hush money for his sinful silence. She was stricken to the heart.

She could not help but feel that her husband bore part of the guilt of the murder because of his silence.

And Mrs. Talbot had come, in the goodness of her heart, to help him—the man whose confession could have restored to her husband his good name and the esteem of his fellow men.

Ellen wept heart-brokenly.

Dr. Van Buren, who well knew what filled the poor young woman's heart, bent over her in deep sympathy and tried to console her.

"Do not torture yourself with what lies behind you and with what cannot be changed," he said softly, "but thank God, rather, that your husband has confessed. Everything will turn out for the best, now."

He took her hand encouragingly. Again he went to his patient.

"He sleeps. His confession was a great effort for him," he murmured, "but still, it has done him good. See how quiet he seems. Before I leave, Mrs. Knight, you must promise me one thing—to be quiet and composed until I return.

"I have a great many calls to make and am anxiously awaited in more than one place. Do not let your thoughts of the past trouble you. Will you try to please me and think as little as possible of what you have just heard?"

He had raised the unhappy woman and looked pleadingly into her tearful eyes.

She did not take away her hands which he held in his, and averting her face softly breathed her answer:

"I will try to be quiet, doctor."

"As soon as I can, I will come again," he nodded "I haven't time, even, to run in to the Talbot home and bring this good news to them there. First come the sick. Goodbye."

With these words, he left her hurriedly.

Mute and motionless, Ellen sat in her chair at the window Her husband did not move.

Once again, the scenes in the tale her husband had just told, passed through her mind and her eyes filled anew with tears. But no—she would weep no more, she had promised him.

She clasped her hands together and in prayer sought consolation and rest for her troubled heart.

Chapter 283

A LOVELY YOUNG WIDOW

HOURS PASSED. It was almost night when Dr. Van Buren returned to the cottage. He was quite worn out. He had been so busy that he had not even thought of food during the day. And now, that he was through, he granted himself no recreation.

He felt himself drawn to the lonely, desolate woman, who would surely be awaiting him. Pale and with faltering steps, she met him.

"Thank God you have come, doctor," Ellen told him. "He is groaning awfully. He seems to breathe with difficulty."

Dr. Van Buren looked at her comprehendingly. The end was near.

Together they went to the bedside of the dying man. He had changed terribly in a few hours. The shadow of death lay on his pallid face.

His sufferings were terrible to behold and doubly so for the poor wife who had hitherto been with him alone. She was hardly able to keep upright.

Dr. Van Buren could not bring himself to go. The poor woman was not to be alone when death came for her husband.

Not a word was spoken—they did not even exchange glances. The eyes of both were riveted on the dying man.

Several times the latter opened his eyes, but showed no sign of consciousness and returned no answer to the physician's questions.

An hour passed in this suspense. There was no more groaning, just a struggle for breath—then came the end.

The death struggle was but brief. With a final violent fight against the inevitable, John Knight had breathed his last.

Dr. Van Buren realized it at once. He rose very softly and closed the dead man's eyes.

Then he concerned himself with Ellen who had been sitting still and had hidden her face in her hands, agonized by the approach of death.

"It is all over," he said to her gently.

She arose. She looked at her husband and quivered visibly, but not a cry, not a sound came from her lips.

Once she had loved him—once she had been happy with him. Now his death had brought her a release for which she had prayed.

Dr. Van Buren did not disturb her. Thoughtfully he looked before him.

What was to be done now? He could not leave the young woman alone with her dead. In a little while he rose and approached her.

Ellen started at the sound. A helpless anxiety showed in her features.

"Are you going now?" she wailed. "I — I will be all alone."

How the thought of her solitude moved him!

"No, you cannot stay here," said he thoughtfully. Suddenly his face brightened. "Come with me. I will take you to good people who will gladly receive you—to the Talbots. I have a visit to make there to look after Mrs. Talbot. Mrs. Ruggles will do all she can for you. I am sure."

But Ellen retreated with a little cry of dread

"Oh, I cannot go there," she stammered, breaking into tears. "They would curse me as the wife of the man, through whose silence they have had so much to suffer. No, no, let me stay here, doctor—I cannot go there!"

Dr. Van Buren took her hand.

"I can understand," he said, "that you hesitate to enter their house, and really I would have been surprised if you had gone without saying anything.

"But do you believe I would have proposed this if I did not know that you had nothing to fear from the Talbots? On the contrary, I know that you will be well and gladly received.

"The fact that you were John Knight's wife, does not make you a partner in his guilt, and then, you come to them, bringing comfort and good fortune for them with you.

"You bring the light of knowledge which will dispel the darkness which has crept into their lives. They will bless the hour in which you crossed the threshold of their home. Come, Mrs. Knight, it is your duty to make known to them your husband's confession."

Her duty! Its commands were imperative.

And as Ellen's look again fell on the dead man, she felt that it would be beyond her power to stay alone with him in the solitary cottage.

With this tumult in her heart she would lose her reason were she to remain alone. She must seek human environment—companionship.

Silently she donned her cloak and a scarf, and thus attired left the room with a last, timorous look at her husband.

Even out in the open they barely exchanged a word as they quickly strode through the dusk. The physician's heart beat in rapid rythm.

He knew that he loved Ellen so warmly and deeply as he had never loved before.

He had looked up to Marie Desmond in wondering admiration. In her he had seen the ideal of noble womanhood.

Something more powerful, however, attracted him to Ellen Knight with the passionate, unconquerable love of a man that demands love in return. Would he ever receive such love?

Ellen's eyes had repeatedly given him the assurance that she was glad to see him come, not only as a physician whose visit relieved the suffering, but as a man who was animated by the kindness of his own heart and who understood her feelings.

Although she had never in the least compromised herself in her dignity or in her position as the wife of another, they had, in the course of time, ever been drawn nearer to each other.

Now there was scarcely any constraint between them. But did this give him any ground for hope?

Not only had he been captivated by her bewitching beauty and the sad, plaintive glow of her dark eyes, but he had been finally vanquished by her self-sacrificing nature and generosity of soul.

To possess such a wife would be the blessing of heaven, and Ellen was entitled to all the happiness the world had to offer in recompense for her many grievous experiences.

She was free now. Dare he show her openly what he felt for her in his heart? But no, he could not.

Misfortune had bowed her beneath its weight and her spirits were low. It would be necessary for her to regain an interest in life, to recover her spirit, and her wounded heart must heal.

Only time and association with the right people

would accomplish all this, and he would not wait a moment longer beyond that time to win her for himself.

His breast filled with hope and joy as he looked with ardent regard at his companion.

How weary were her steps, how bowed her bearing!

The path of penance was hard for her, and had he not made it a matter of duty—if only to persuade her to accompany him, she would never have set foot on it and humbled her pride.

Again and again he wrestled with a wild impulse to say:

"Bury the past and all its memories, with the dead. Look not behind you, but ahead, into the future. Let it be my care to provide for your happiness; I cannot be happy without you and my love for you is so wonderful that it will give me power to roll from your path every obstacle to our united bliss."

But he controlled himself. He said not the words. He was content to take her limply hanging right hand and draw it through his arm.

"Courage Ellen, courage," he whispered, and the vibration of his voice must have betrayed to her what was going on in his heart. "The past is dead, and in this hour the doors of a new life open for you."

She shook her head mournfully.

"No, doctor," she answered, "I do not count on it any more. The past will remain with me for the rest of my life; I cannot shake it off. I may find rest and contentment, but never happiness, but if I find only rest, I will thank God from my heart."

A bright light glowed in his eyes.

"Courage, Ellen, I repeat," he smiled. "Happiness will come and we shall see if you will admit it when it knocks at your door."

She looked up at him uncomprehendingly; but when she saw the fire in his eyes, she lowered hers in confusion.

Had she understood at last?

Could it be possible that she had an inkling of his deep love for her? No answer came.

But into her cheeks had stolen a tell-tale red. She insistently kept her eyes averted when he sought to look into them.

Chapter 234

DELIVERANCE

LLEN KNIGHT shrank from crossing the threshold of the Talbot home. She was seized by a feeling of apprehension. She suddenly felt though she was outcast and outlawed. Her existence in the lonely cottage had made her very shy and retiring. She trembled at the thought that Victor Talbot would angrily order her out—the wife of the man who had had the power, but did not use it, to avert the misfortunes that had come upon Lillian and himself.

Dr. Van Buren, however, drew her forward with gentle insistence. He sympathized with the poor, anxious woman from his heart, for well he knew what was oppressing her.

He led her not to the sick room, nor to the sitting room, but to Mrs. Ruggles.

But before he had opened the kitchen door, a shrill and angry voice struck his ear.

"I won't stay here a moment longer, Mrs. Ruggles," it cried. "I've packed my things, and I will go early in the morning!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Jennie!" Mrs. Ruggles replied. "Here Mrs. Talbot is sick abed and you want to go away and leave me alone with all this work on my hands. Can't you see how wrong it is? Hasn't she always been good and kind to you? Has anyone done anything to you here?"

"No," admitted the girl, "but in the village they all laugh at me for staying here. Sunday I was at a dance and they made fun of me and asked if I saw the ghost

that goes around here nights. They told me to take care, or I might be killed one day."

"For the land's sake—and who are these people that told you so?" exclaimed Mrs. Ruggles horrified. "Well, God will punish them. There has been sickness and misery enough in the village and they should not dare to say such things."

"Why wasn't I told when I was hired that no one wanted to come here because the house was haunted?" returned the girl. "Before God, I would never have set foot in this house! I——"

Dr. Van Buren had already rapped twice at the kitchen door but his knocking had remained unheard.

Now, however, the door was suddenly thrown open and Mrs. Ruggles' sharp voice rang out.

"Such impudence! Instead of thanking me for what you have learned here, you pretend to have been misused! My patience is at an end. See that you get out of here quick!"

Crying aloud, Jennie came running out, but uttered a piercing shriek as she suddenly became aware of the two strange figures in the passage.

Without pausing, however, she rushed up the stairs.

Mrs Ruggles, who stood in the middle of the room, flushed with anger, was startled as Dr. Van Buren and Ellen made their appearance in the open doorway.

"Is that you, doctor?" she cried. "Has anything happened?"

"Nothing, Mrs. Ruggles," he replied with a smile, "at least nothing serious. I bring you someone who needs your protection. Can you find room for Mrs. Knight for a short time, perhaps?"

Mrs. Ruggles, who was not a little flattered that the doctor had applied to her, cast a look of scrutiny at

the pale young woman, and answered:

"Why, certainly, doctor, the guest chamber is vacant and in order. But you must be chilled young woman. Why, how you tremble! Come, sit down here in my chair. No, no, here by the stove. Just a minute and I will make some tea for you while you are warming yourself."

Without ceremony she drew the young woman into the chair. Ellen was speechless.

Touched by the old woman's rough kindness, tears started to her eyes.

"You see, Mrs. Knight, there are still some good people left," remarked Dr. Van Buren, pressing Ellen's hand comfortingly. "Now that Mrs. Ruggles is looking after you I will go to see my patient, and then, since you so desire it, I will break the good news to Mr. Talbot."

Tears rolled down Ellen's cheeks. Unconsciously she clung to his hand. She felt instinctively that he was her only refuge—her saviour.

"God bless you for everything—for all you have done," she murmured chokingly. "I pray for Mrs. Talbot's quick recovery."

Dr Van Buren's eyes brightened.

"She must recover now. This remedy will work wonders."

He nodded another good night and also gave his hand to Mrs. Ruggles, who looked at him in astonishment and wonder.

While the old woman was busily occupying herself with Ellen, Dr. Van Buren entered the sick room.

As usual, Victor sat at Lillian's bedside; her hand rested in his. Her condition had apparently become graver, for her face was flushed and she tossed restlessly on her bed.

A look of relief came over Talbot's face as the

doctor entered.

Gently he withdrew his hand from Lillian's and approached Dr. Van Buren with hand outstretched.

"Well, how is she?" Dr. Van Buren asked in a low voice. There was an accent of gladness in it, however, which escaped Victor's notice.

"Unchanged," he answered sighing.

The doctor smiled mysteriously.

"There will soon be a change for the better," he remarked.

Going to his patient, he took her pulse. His bearing showed that he was not worried.

When he touched her wrist, Lillian had opened her eyes a little, but she closed them again.

Having taken her temperature, the doctor remarked:

"The fever is leaving her. We are making some progress."

Talbot's careworn features brightened up as if with sunshine.

"You give me hope and life," he said gratefully. "God only knows what anxiety I have suffered these days."

Dr. Van Buren went up to him, his eyes alight with friendly aid and comfort.

"With heaven's help I will restore something else in addition to your wife's health," he said. "I am the bearer of glad tidings for you to-day, Talbot. But sit down and listen quietly to what I have to say."

"My God! What do you mean. What is it?" Victor cried excitedly.

"God's help is nearest when need is greatest! The old saying has once more justified itself. This evening I have been at the bedside of a dying man, heard his last confessions and learned who killed Roger Hawkins!"

"Doctor! Good heavens! How——"

An outcry rang through the room.

Startled, both men veered about. They saw Lillian sitting up in bed, bolt upright—her eyes opened wide in an eager, expectant gaze.

"Victor! Oh Victor, dear, tell me, it it true? He knows who—who did it?," she gasped.

Talbot was already beside her, kneeling, his arms holding her embraced. He tried to speak to her, but his lips were mute. His emotion was too great for mere words.

"Victor—is it true too—that——" this time the question came like a soft breath. With a sigh Lillian dropped back as if lifeless.

"Doctor! For heaven's sake! She is dying!" cried Talbot.

"Have no fears, Victor," came back. "Joy does not kill. She has fainted."

And this proved to be the case. Dr. Van Buren restored Lillian to consciousness in a little while.

When her eyes opened again, their gaze was full and clear. First they rested on her husband, then she looked interrogatively at the doctor.

"No, no—it was a dream," she murmured, smiling brightly. "Oh tell me, doctor, what you heard. Oh, if it were only true——"

"It is true." he told her. "After many struggles on his death-bed, I induced Knight to say what he knew. Roger Hawkins was shot by a man whom he had discharged from his service for dishonesty on the day before."

"Oh, I can hardly grasp it all," cried Lillian. "No more can they jeer at us or throw our gifts back at our feet. You are released, dearest——"

She could speak no more. A convulsive sobbing

shook her breast.

Talbot had taken her in his arms. Strong man that he was, he was no less shaken than she, and big tears rolled from his eyes.

Dr. Van Buren had retired to the window. His heart brimmed over with gladness.

He rejoiced with them in the great joy which had burst upon them so suddenly and dazzlingly. This hour restored life to Lillian and assured happiness and peace to her and her husband.

Although the young woman wept, her tears were now a balm for the wounds of her heart, washing away the old sorrow and bitterness.

The two had suffered almost superhuman agonies. The moment of their release had come. They could stand up and breathe freely. The time of trial had passed.

It was some time before they were, in a measure, composed.

The first words, Talbot could bring forth were words of concern for her—his wife.

"Lillian, my darling," he said coaxingly, "be calm, dot no weep, it is not good for you. Think of your health. You must get well, my love, and enjoy the new happy life in store for us."

"My own Victor," she murmured, "my tears have been for joy. How light my heart is now. How shall we thank God for His great goodness! This happiness is so great, so wonderful!

"Over night—suddenly—it has come! Oh, doctor, dear, good man, you have brought it. You have been our guardian angel. God bless you for it!"

Deeply moved, Dr. Van Buren took both Lillian's hand which she eagerly offered him and pressed them in sincere friendship.

"I rejoice with all my heart that I could be instru-

mental," he murmured. "Now all will be well again."

He smiled as he added:

"But not a word more — the doctor forbids it! So, lie nice and quiet. There will be plenty of time to speak."

Obeying like a child, Lillian lay down. She would willingly have done anything which he might ask of her in her blissful state.

Victor impressed a tender, affectionate kiss on her brow.

He was a man who bore great, overpowering joy as silently and unobtrusively as great pain and sorrow. But the repression stirred his heart all the more.

He was free and could raise his head proudly once again! The world without, which had judged him so wrongly, would now have to make amends.

The two men sat beside Lillian's bed; she regarded them with looks radiant with joy. Dr. Van Buren now related minutely the circumstances attending Knight's confession.

"Strange," cried Talbot, when the doctor had concluded, "that no suspicion was cast on this man, but, of course, the evidence against me was so conclusive that I can hardly comprehend now how I came to be acquitted. It seems as if everything conspired against me.

"My lawyer who defended me, promised to come while the courts were closed and make new investigations from here, but the poor fellow fell ill and he has not yet recovered.

"I felt as if I rested under a curse. I was restive and impatient under the burden of my fate, and now, all at once, everything has been cleared up and help has come from a source which I never could have thought of before."

"Where is Mrs. Knight?" asked Lillian softly. "Is

she all alone in the cottage?"

The question was embarrassing to Dr. Van Buren.

"No, I would not permit her to stay alone with the dead," he answered hesitatingly. "The poor woman was in such a state of excitement in consequence of her husband's confession, that I feared for her reason. After much persuasion I induced her to leave the cottage.

"And now I beg your forgiveness for my presumptuous action—for I have brought Mrs. Knight here and have given her into Mrs. Ruggles' care.

"I really would not have known what else to do, but I felt sure that you would not hold against her the sufferings which you had to bear through her husband's fault. I hope I have not been too hasty.

"I only ask that she be received for a short time until she has become resigned, and until something can be done for her future."

Lillian's bright look answered his question, and Talbot, too, heartily pressed his hand.

"You did right, it is Christian duty, doctor," said Victor. "The poor woman will find a home with us. Yes, yes, Lillian, I understand you and I will take care of her, rest assured.

"But do not speak my love, when you are stronger I shall have Mrs. Knight come to you. You liked her so well at first sight, that I wish to see and speak to her myself"

Dr. Van Buren's face had reddened somewhat. His friends could have no idea how near to his heart was the woman to whom they promised protection, and what hope and desire he attached to her.

But he must not speak now. Ellen was but just widowed, he must spare her.

With the glad consciousness of having made two

good, kind people happy, Dr. Van Buren finally took his leave to return to his home.

The lights in the Talbot home, however, were not put out until long after midnight. Neither Lillian nor Victor could find rest in the excess of their happiness.

But upstairs, in the quiet guest chamber, a desolate young woman pressed her tearful face deep into the pillows to stifle the cries of grief which constantly welled up in her breast.

Soon all the world would know the shame which her husband had brought upon her, and the name Knight would be spoken of with horror.

All her poverty, misery and heartache had not been able to bow her so deeply as this shame.

She would never be given the position at Oak Manor, she, the woman whose husband was a murderer's accomplice!

And Dr. Van Buren, to whom she looked up as to a higher being — a deep and unbridgable gulf now separated her from him. A feeling of pity and charity only, had animated him in his kindness.

From now on, however, he would have as little as possible to do with her — a woman who bore a sullied name.

The thought of the alms which she had received from him burned to her very soul. She would not rest until she had absolved her debt.

For her husband she had not a tear. Horror and dread were the only feeling which he had engendered in hr for a long time, although pity for him had prompted her at the end.

The heritage which he had left her was one of shame, and one which would embitter her life to the very end.

Little did she suspect that Dr. Van Buren had

fallen desperately in love with her.

When she fell asleep at last, the tears were still wet on her cheeks. That, in her state of mind, should dream was only natural. Dr. Van Buren figured in all of them.

He was holding her in his arms and he was kissing her, Ellen Knight gave a deep sigh of contentment.

Chapter 235

MRS. CRAWFORD'S PUNISHMENT

MRS. CRAWFORD had lost Victor Talbot, and her fight to prevent her step-daughter from marrying him. She had stooped to every trickery only the mind of a criminal at heart could devise. To a certain extent she had the backing of her neighbors and friends when she objected so strenuously to this union. It was only too well known that Talbot was under a cloud of suspicion.

There were those who still believed him guilty of having murdered Roger Hawkins, in spite of the fact that a trial before a jury of twelve men and women failed to convict him.

Then, quite unexpectedly, the newspapers furnished a bit of news which came like the explosion of a bomb-shell. Victor Talbot's picture appeared on the front page with the caption "Vindicated".

A long article followed. Knight's confession to Dr. Van Buren was printed word for word.

At the end it stated that Mrs. Ellen Knight, had been taken in by the Talbots and that she had become a permanent member of the family.

When Mrs. Crawford read this article one morning as she sat at the breakfast table, she emitted a sound which sounded very much like a hiss.

For a long while she sat as if turned to stone. The expression on her face was one of rage and disappointment indeed.

She had been robbed of the weapon with which she meant to punish Victor Talbot and her step

daughter.

It almost killed her to realize that the despised couple would receive the congratulations and apologies of those who had snubbed them.

"Oh, well," she snorted, tossing the paper aside. "I don't care what other people do. I am through with Lillian. If she ever dares to set foot in my house again, I'll throw her out bodily."

From that day on Mrs. Crawford made a determined attempt to forget how passionately she had loved Victor Talbot. She hated him now with all the vindictiveness characteristic of a scorned woman.

There was but one purpose in her mind now. She would show him that there were other men willing to love her.

Already she had become very good friends with Walter Wayne, who now had become the sole owner of the estate vacated under such tragic circumstances by his cousin, Harold Wayne.

Walter Wayne was somewhat of an unsophisticated youth in the early twenties. And he made it very plain that he was more than merely interested in the fascinating widow.

But he was rather an outsider in the community. The people had not forgotten Harold Wayne and his affair with Alice Gordon.

Consequently Walter was made to suffer because he bore the same name. Quite naturally he was pleased when Mrs. Crawford took him up.

Although Mrs. Crawford was close to forty years of age, she was still a beautiful woman. Constant application of mud packs and other methods which preserved a youthful face, had worked wonders.

Marian Crawford, as she wanted to be called, possessed a figure a girl of eighteen might be proud of. She

had a way of using her hazel eyes that never failed to bring the desired results.

With Walter Wayne now dancing attention, she began to live in new anticipation.

She was a very rich woman, and could follow her own inclination in every way. There was a great satisfaction in the fact that the entire Crawford estate was hers.

The part of the fortune which was to go to Lillian as soon as she became of age, she could spare easily. Already she was making plans secretly for another honey-moon.

Although Walter Wayne had not yet asked her to become his wife, she had read his intentions shrewdly.

But there was a rude shock in store for Marian Crawford. The first inkling that some trouble was afoot came when she received a letter from Mr. Shields, the lawyer.

It read as follows:

Dear Mrs. Crawford:

As the legal adviser of your deceased husband, I am obliged at this time to notify you that on the day Miss Lillian, now Mrs. Victor Talbot, attains her majority, I shall read the will made by her father before he passed away.

Your step-daughter will reach her legal age a week from to-day. For certain reasons the reading of this will shall take place in my office that afternoon at three o'clock.

As one of the interested parties you are urged

to be present. Mrs. Lillian Talbot has also been notified to come.

Yours very truly:

A. W. Shields, Attorney-at-Law.

Mrs. Crawford experienced a peculiar sensation as she read the letter from Mr. Shields over again. So far as she knew her late husband had left no such a will.

She had been left under the impression that the estate was to be divided between her and Lillian.

At first she decided not to worry about the matter. But when she recalled certain phases of her married life, she had to admit that Mr. Crawford had cooled toward her during his last days.

Anxiety caused her to call Mr. Shields up in an effort to ascertain what the will contained.

"I am sorry I am not in a position to tell you that," he replied to her pointed question. "The will is in a sealed envelope in my private safe. Your curiosity shall be satisfied on the day specified in my letter to you."

She hung up the receiver with a dark frown on her face. Anxiety was becoming fear. There was trouble brewing. She felt it instinctively.

At last the day came when she was to know her fate. At the appointed hour she presented herself at Mr. Shields' office. Lillian and her husband were already there.

Victor Talbot nodded curtly, and her step-daughter smiled.

Mrs. Crawford only stared.

Continued in next number

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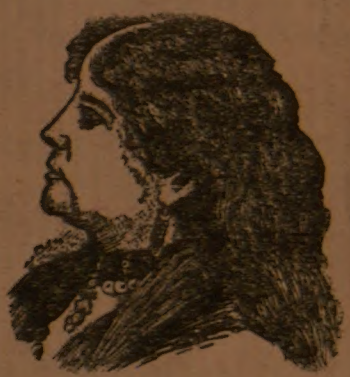

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Only these Cards and Nothing Else can be thy Savior

were his continual thoughts. Under the impulse of this inspiration he informed the chief of the magical power of these cards, which in possession of an enemy would cause dire disaster to his family as well as himself. Thoroughly frightened the chief gave this treasure to Korn and escorted him to the seacoast far from his place of captivity. After various wanderings and adventures he arrived at the German colony Kameron, where he secured a position on board a Hamburg merchant ship; and through these events we became possessed of the *Genuine Cards*, the handwritten interpretation and instructions how to use them.

M'lle LeNormand destroyed her cards and instructions before her death and had the ashes inclosed in a vessel of lead and which was laid in her tomb according to her last will, so these interpretations written for Napoleon I., and so cleverly saved by Korn were the only and genuine existing. These cards—Oraculum—have been tried in important events and are indeed *"Answers of Destiny."* For the believers it is a sacred treasure and in many instances an article of great value. Unbelievers can pass many tedious hours pleasantly in many ways, particularly in answering delicate questions correctly or otherwise. M'lle LeNormand's instructions in both English and German are complete and plain, and can readily be interpreted by everybody.

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